

Calvary.

"Tis finished;" thus the Savior cried,
In anguish on Golgotha's mount;
While forth from his dear wounded side,
The life-blood flowed—a crimson fount.
"Tis finished;" pain and grief are o'er;
The faithful heart has ceased to beat;
For sinful man its last throb bore
A plea unto the mercy-seat.
"Tis finished;" his work here is done,
The mission of his life fulfilled;
The victory over sin is won,
E'en as the heavenly Father willed.
"Tis finished;" from a world of woe
Unto the glories of the throne
The Savior went; and we shall go
If faithful till he claims "his own."

M. WARNER.

The Cities of the Plain.

Five cities, (Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboun, Bela, afterward Zoar,) are associated in sacred history as being "The cities of the plain." Of these, Sodom was apparently the largest and most prominent, and Bela the smallest. The first notice of these cities is found in the genealogy of the descendants of Ham. Our knowledge of the cities is limited. We get only a glimpse of their history as the biography of Lot connects itself with Sodom.

Concerning the location of these cities, there are many conjectures and few facts. The Scripture statements are too few and indefinite to form any conclusive arguments while the theories are too numerous, and many of them too insignificant for insertion in this brief paper. The several titles, "The Plain," "Vale of Siddim," "Plain of Jordan," have a common signification and are expressive of a region verdant and fertile, containing bubbling fountains and running brooks. Such a country is not now bordering on the Dead sea. That the plain was contiguous no one disputes. Hence, judging from the present sterile condition of the country, some conclude, that in order to make it "as the garden of the Lord," "as the land of Egypt," some process of irrigation must have been used.

The following are a few of the arguments used for the location of the cities at the northern end of the Dead sea.

1st, The "plain of Jordan," which contained the cities is believed to have been in the valley of the Jordan, and not at the southern end of the sea.

2nd, If Lasha is situated on the Wady Zurka Main, nine miles south of the northern end of the sea, than the evidence is in favor of the northern location. The land enclosed in a triangle, the lines being drawn between the cities of Lasha, Gaza and Lidon would place the cities north of the sea.

3rd, The simplest version of Chedorlaomer's route favors the northern location. On his way to the cities this conqueror "smote all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites, that dwelt in Hazazon—tamar," which according to II Chronicles 20: 2, "is in Engedi." This army moving northward passed Engedi, which is midway between the northern and southern ends of the sea, and then conquered the cities.

4th, Then it is stated by trustworthy men who have traveled in Palestine that the southern end of the Dead sea is too far from Bethel to be seen even if uninterrupted by mountains, and that mountains intervene and obstruct the vision.

5th, Abraham could see the smoke at the northern end as well as at the southern from Hebron which is about midway between the extremities of the sea.

6th, There are slimepits at the northern end of the sea.

7th, The places at the south of the sea claimed by some as being the locations of the cities, would place Sodom and Zoar about sixteen miles apart. This would make rather a long morning walk for Lot and his daughters during twilight; but Lot being accustomed to city life was opposed to so much exercise.

Arguments in favor of the southern end of the Dead sea are as follows:

1st, Traditions from the time of Eusebius, Josephus and Jerome, places them there.

2nd, The presence of slimepits which contained bitumen.

3rd, The mound of salt is at this end of the sea and is called Jebel Usdum, which is apparently an echo of the word Sodom. Here are also pillars of detached salt among which tradition still recognizes Lot's wife.

4th, Abram could see smoke of the destroyed cities from Hebron.

5th, South of the peninsula Lisan, the sea is very shallow as it beyond its original limits.

6th, The similarity of the names of the cities to other names in this region.

7th, The Scripture statement, "Vale of Siddim which is the Salt sea." The theory of Dean Milman, that the Jordan in the days of Sodom flowed where the Dead sea now is, and thence into the Red sea is opposed to the well established maxim, "water cannot run up hill."

The means of destruction may be considered in this connection. Whether or not the cities were destroyed by natural causes has been much discussed. Some suppose that an earthquake or some volcanic action was used, others think that the cities were struck by lightning and then sank, and were covered with water. These are means that might have been used; but many believe that a shower of fire and brimstone fell from heaven and destroyed the cities. Two Hebrew words are said to be used in describing the overthrow of the cities. The interpretation is, "To throw down, to destroy," "To overturn." It is said that water is not even implied in the description of the destruction.

When these cities first came to the notice of the historian, they were already rich and in the enjoyment of temporal prosperity. Each city had its own King, and in local affairs they were independent of one another. For their protection there was union of sympathy and concerted action. When "Amraphel King of Shinar, Arioch King of Elassar, Chedorlaomer King of Elam, and Lidal King of Nations," made war against the cities of the plain, Bera King of Sodom, Birsha King of Gomorrah, Shinob King of Admah, Shemeber king of Zeboun, and king of Bela, united their forces against the eastern armies. In this war they were defeated and for twelve years they were subject to Chedorlaomer and doubtless paid tribute to him. In the thirteenth year, they rebelled and in the fourteenth year of their subjection Chedorlaomer made that memorable tour in which he captured the cities of the plain. After he conquered all the nations with whom he came in contact, and being about ready to attack Sodom and Gomorrah, the kings of the plain went out and arrayed themselves against the eastern monarch; but they were defeated. "The kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled to their slimepits and fell there;" "and they that remained fled to the mountain." The conquerors then took away all their goods, their victuals, and also captives; among the captives was Lot. Some one having escaped came and told Abraham of the misfortune. Upon hearing of Lot's capture he took 318 of his trained men, and allied with neighboring soldiers he followed the enemy. He overtook them at Dan and attacked them by night, routed them and followed them to Hobak to the left of Damascus. Having recovered Lot, all the people, and the goods, he returned and was greeted by the King of Sodom, who offered Abraham the recovered goods for his service. But, with his usual independence, he refused the goods and delivered it with the captives to the King. Through the influence of Abraham the people of the plain were again free and independent.

From this time to the destruction of the cities they were likely peaceful with other nations and their only development seems to have been in wickedness. Licentiousness grew to an enormous extent. Crimes of a most atrocious and debauching nature were indulged in until the fires of the Almighty's indignation broke forth in thundering clouds, and showers of fire and brimstone. The importunities of Abraham could not stay the judgments of God. Mercy ceased to be a virtue and justice was administered. None but Lot and his two daughters were saved; even that once saintly mother and wife became so contaminated by the immoral atmosphere of Sodom that in defiance of God's command she looked back, and for disobedience became a pillar of salt. Such was the

fate of the cities of the Plain. Never since the flood, was there a more awful catastrophe, a more direful calamity than the destruction of these cities. Their fate has been in succeeding ages "an example unto those that after should live ungodly." While the clouds of God's wrath were brewing and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, was going on Lot was walking into Zoar, in the splendor and brilliancy of the morning sun. So may the people of God when the earth shall shake and quiver, and the wrath of God be enkindled against the ungodly; walk not to Zoar, but on immortal shores to New Jerusalem, under the hallowed and genial influences of the Son of God.

A. A. COBER.

Purity.

BY W. J. H. BAUMAN.

In the relation we sustain to God and to each other purity is the prime thing in point of essentiality.

First. Purity of affection; we are not to fashion ourselves. "Again, according to our former lusts" we are to have love only for that which is good, we are to "eschew evil," "Prove all things, hold fast that which is good." We must not only, not lie, steal, get drunk, defraud, hate, be malicious, slander &c, but we must hate all these things, and love the opposite—the good.

Only by pureness of affection can we please God and attain to that standard of Christian holiness necessary to gain an admittance into the kingdom of saving grace.

Second. Purity of thought, "Charity thinketh no evil." We must think right, and then keep from sinning secretly. The Apostle teaches obedience in thought; this can only be done by constantly looking to God, by praying without ceasing. Birds may fly over our heads, but we must not let them build nests in our hair. Evil thoughts may flash through our mind, but we must not harbor them.

Third. Our form of worship must be pure. Unless our motives are pure, all will be of no avail. We should not be Pharisaical, but seek the honor of God in all we do.

"Solomon said, keep thy heart with all diligence for out of it are the issues of life." It is wrong to have "A form of godliness," while at the same time we "deny the power thereof." We are to obey "From the heart that form of government."

Fourth. Our communication should be pure, for, "Evil communications corrupt good manners." We are creatures of influences, and by injudicious communication with evil talking and evil acting associates, we are apt to lose that godly dignity which should always characterize the child of God. Under no circumstances is it becoming Christian character to indulge in impure talk or impure conduct. "When sinners entice thee, consent thou not."

Fifth. Purity of character is the grandest factor in Christian happiness, and Christian influence. O how ardently should the child of God labor for this so greatly important, conspicuous and forcible grace in our holy christianity! Purity of character is what causes our righteousness to be as "The waves of the sea." Its power and influence is irresistible. It constitutes the ground-work of Christian triumph and success. It puts to shame all opposition. It causes the blush of shame to mantle the cheeks of hell. In it there is joy, permanency, success in this life, and joy forevermore in the better land. Let purity of character my brother and sister, be your shield against all persecution.

Sixth. Purity of life. While purity of character embodies purity of life and affection of heart, we should nevertheless not forget that to fully attain to purity of life, it becomes necessary that we accept the ordinances in themselves, meaningless, but God has commanded them for the purification of his people, for reasons best known to himself. "Sanctify them in thy truth; thy word is truth." "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth." "Cleanse yourselves, ye sinners!" How? "By obeying the truth,"—the word. St. Paul saith, "The life that I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God." Faith means obedience.

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